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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TECHNOLOGY TOOL USED BY THE NGOS IN ADDRESSING ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN, YOUTH AND CHILDREN.

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Abstract

The penetration of technology can be found in every aspect of our lives, our work culture, learning dynamics and making choices with our fingertips. It has been noted that directly or indirectly several devices have heightened our civic aspirations – connecting and contributing to the world outside.

The Internet is an important aspect of technology which has made the world more global than before. The on growing search engines, easy access and information available in various forms on the internet are a proof that how heavily we are dependent on the internet.

The web-world got major acceleration with the advent of social networking sites which were initially designed for connecting with people. Gradually they turned as mandatory business tools and resources for everything which has its existence in this fast moving business environment.

The world of social service also did not remain untouched for long and understanding the influential effect and potential of this technology and platform, the NGOs around the world have made their way to multiple social media platforms in order to share their voices, reach to people and showcase what they are doing.

In this study, the researchers have taken four established NGOs operating in India i.e. Goonj, Breakthrough, Impulse and, GGIC in order to understand these NGOs & their take on social media as a platform to hear, help and protect the women, adults, children of the society.

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Introduction:-

The term "non-governmental organization" was created in Article 71 of the Charter of the newly formed United Nations in 1945. An NGO can be any kind of organization which is free from the control of governmental influence and has no motto to make a profit but do public welfare.

NGOs are components of social movements and have played a major role in pushing for sustainable development at various levels of rural, urban, domestic and, international. Over the years, they have chosen different subjects which are worth pondering and are in need of strong action to set all right. Issues like gender inequality, domestic violence, sexual abuse, poverty, human trafficking, health, education, shelter and sanitation and much more have been taken proactively taken by NGOs across the globe.

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The idea of NGOs is to create a compassionate society wherein their units along with the volunteering citizens create and execute programmes in order to respond to the issues faced by the citizens and create a difference there. With the kind of change many NGOs have brought in the society and reach they have made, perhaps that's one of the reasons why the number of people worldwide donating money to NGOs has increased from 1.2 billion in 2011 to 1.4 billion in 2014. By 2030, the number is expected to grow to 2.5 billion. (Source: Charities Aid Foundation).

Why the Need of an NGO

In a civil society, the role of Government is to fulfill its different activities ranging from policy development, execution, management, and sustainability. Despite various stages of planning and immense thought process, there always remain scopes for some loopholes and challenges which are bound to appear at any stage.

Our Constitution speaks about Fundamental Rights as well Duties for every citizen. In context to this, we should not only count on the deliverables by the government and their incompetent attitude in performing duties but, also our duties as citizens.

This notion gave birth to NGOs around us wherein these units are trying to play a key role in creating awareness among the mass and take the onus of giving a helping hand to the government. in various avenues directly or indirectly.

The NGOs have to play a key role in creating awareness among the public and become extended arms of the government to assist them in the process. Their significant roles lie in understanding issues by interacting with various bodies who strongly affect government's action.

No government can be omnipresent all the times no matter even it's been vested with powers but has limitations too.

The Indian Scenario

India has been a home for many NGOs which are domestic in nature and even leading foreign NGOs have made their way to this country and have set up their offices in various cities of India.

Every NGO differs on the basis of their motives and operations, some of the leading NGOs of India are Cry, Goonj, Smile India Foundation, Help Age India, Save The Children, Breakthrough etc. These NGOs have pushed boundaries to give relief to people in terms of their mission focuses on relief suffering, to promote the interest underdeveloped sections of society, reduce child labor, education, domestic violence, gender inequality etc.

As per UNICEF, India, one of the leading countries in Asia has a whopping 33 million children employed in various forms of child labor. 1 in every 11 children in India works to earn a living, according to statistics by ActionAid India.

There are five states which are India's biggest child labor employers- Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, as per data are given out by Save the Children NGO. National capital Delhi is responsible for a share of 1 million child labor alone.

Coming on to women, every third woman, since the age of 15, has faced the domestic violence of various forms in the country, reported the National Family Health Survey (NHFS-4) released by the Union health ministry. Thus, incubating a new round of debate about the cultural underpinnings to domestic violence.

According to the survey, 27 percent of women have experienced physical violence since the age 15 in India. This experience of physical violence among women is more common in rural areas than among women in urban areas. Domestic violence cases, where women reported physical abuse in rural and urban areas, were at 29 percent and 23 percent, respectively.

After the massive use of traditional media, now NGOs have made their way to social media. They are using various social media platforms to reach out to their audiences. Since, an NGO works both for rural and urban mass and only 17% of rural India has access to the internet, according to 2017 report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India. This is a staggering contrast to the 60% of urban Indians who have internet access. More surprisingly perhaps, women only make up for 29% of India's internet users. Studies have shown that the digital divide is not just between rural and urban India, but also between men and women.

In West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district 74.4% rural youth in the age group of 14 to 18 years had never had access to Internet while in Odisha's Khordha district, the number was 65.8%. In Jharkhand's Purbi Singhbhum the figure stood at 68.8% and in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district 67.5%. In Assam's Kamrup district the number was 64.1%. How do then these people find their respective NGOs and seek for help via social media.

Aim

To understand how well NGOs have made a paradigm shift from traditional media to social media. The challenges faced by the NGOs while targeting an urban mass and rural mass.

Research Methodology:-

In this research Case study method is used for the in-depth study of 3 NGOs of India- Breakthrough, Goonj & Impulse

Breakthrough

Mallika Parvati Dutt's brainchild Breakthrough, today stands tall when it comes to hear, share and help the women victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, gender inequality and child marriage. Established in the year, 2000, Breakthrough plunged to take action to help out victims.

The founder of Breakthrough has a strong portfolio when it comes to Human Rights. She has served as Program Officer for Human Rights and Social Justice at the Ford Foundation's New Delhi Office. She was Associate Director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University, an institution that was at the forefront of the global movement demanding recognition for women's rights as human rights. She has served as the Director of the Norman Foundation and is also a co-founder of Sakhi for South Asian Women.

The NGO now has offices in New Delhi and New York City, and operations in the north Indian states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Since 2008, "Bell Bajao!" campaign on domestic violence has reached more than 130 million people in India; in 2013, the award-winning campaign went global, with spots featuring such international celebrities as Sir Patrick Stewart and Michael Bolton.

For them, Social media plays a huge part in our strategy since it helps represent their on-ground work online as well as create a space for feminist discourse in the online space using same theories from their groundwork and creating content that is more tailored to the audience present on social media.

Understanding the upcoming transition which the world was supposed to face, they made their presence on multiple social media platforms like YouTube channel is over 10 years old. Facebook & Twitter came about in 2009 and joined Instagram in 2013.

Anika Verma, Senior Campaign Manager, Breakthrough said "Their social media audience is usually from metros like Mumbai & Delhi and the age group ranges from 16-45 and another interesting fact which was noticed was they have 74% men as their audience and women as 26%. Creating engaging content is the thrust of any social media platform. Ms. Verma also added that "Staying true to our politics all the while ensuring that we have the pulse of what's happening in the online space, from various news breaking to new judgments passed around violence against women and other gender-related issues. We do specific campaigns informed by the larger organizational narrative." The NGO is making use of texts, pictures, videos, campaigns, infographics for various social media platforms is a big way as compared to other NGOs.

With the inculcation of paid trends to garner more attention, the team of Breakthrough makes more than one post day on their different platforms. They majorly look forward to organic boosts which are being done by their followers and many times they get volunteers from their audience as well for their movements. They also do collaborative work for higher engagement and reach.

Their in-house team works for social media strategy, content, design, video and marketing and monthly analytics of social media is also done by them to understand the reach and engagement.

Their successful online campaign #ShareYourStory with your son campaign performed well. It was able to show that change begins at home, by creating a space within families where mothers talk to their sons about different

kinds of sexual harassment they have faced. It was to make the idea more tangible that 'change is possible' if we start communicating more with boys and not be instructional towards girls and the whole protectionist approach of 'how to stay safe'. The 2 videos we created were played on national TV as well, along with garnering attention online. The campaign also urged other women to come and share their voices on this issue.

Fundraising is an important part of an NGO, every promotion depends upon it. The NGO still goes by the ways of Traditional PR – Media relations/Media Coverage. Their 80% percent of the budget goes to PR, 10-12% for production and rest on social media (since it is all in-house).

The study also says that Breakthrough hasn't seen great results when it comes to fundraising through social media. They are more into personal interactions and email strategy.

The way we use social media is also through our partnerships with Facebook, Instagram & Twitter where we work collectively to bring policy level changes for keeping the online spaces violence free. Given social media is not just a tool for us but also our face as an organization, it is the comments that we receive from people who feel hopeful that they are not alone is something I would consider our success. Tracking individual stories end to end is much harder given the nature of the space, we look at success as an accumulation.

With the advent of social media, victims have become more vocal especially after the #MeToo movement, so many people shared their stories of sexual harassment and assault openly. It was heartbreaking and at the same time, Breakthrough believes that in future, the joint efforts will create a space where we are free and safe. At the same time, But social media trolling is a major deterrent for many victims who are constantly silenced and it has become a monster now. The NGO is trying to fight it but they need a much larger overhaul of the online spaces.

Breakthrough believes that every little incident, story, remark counts when it comes to social media. It is powerful but as citizens we need to understand our responsibilities and to not fall into the trap of sensationalism, oversimplification, jumping on the trend bandwagon. Have fun with it, always keep your sources ready and most importantly Verify and cross check everything you post or ask others to post.

Goonj

Anshu Gupta, popularly known as the Clothing Man is the Founder of an Indian based nonprofit – Goonj, a recipient Anshu Gupta, Founder Goonj and Magsaysay Awardee, started his journey to establish Goonj in the year 1999 after his stint with the Corporate. He holds a Masters in economics and a double major in journalism and mass communications. As a graduate student, he traveled to Uttarkashi in North India in 1991 to help with relief efforts after a devastating earthquake in the region. This was his first real exposure to the scale of problems of India's rural masses.

For Goonj, technology has been important aspect at different levels and they have been using it for both internal and external communication. Social media, in particular, has been instrumental for Goonj's communication, especially in urban India. It has been an influential tool in not only communicating its work the scale and impact of its work in rural India but also in mobilizing the urban mass and involving them in the process, be it in the collection camps or awareness sessions etc.

Their presence on social media primarily started with their website which they started in 1999- 2000 and gradually moved on to the other platforms. They use different social media platforms like Facebook, website, App, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, and Whatsapp.

The traffic ration for each of the platform varies according to the type of the post/content and its compatibility with the platform.

They recently have become a family of 2,00,000 people on Facebook and 1 million on Twitter. Engagement on these two social media is relatively high given a large number of followers and platform's nature. As we are working in India, our larger audience is Indian.

According to Ms. Meenakshi Gupta, Co-Founder, Goonj "Strategy around content creation is based on the information needs of our audiences or our work needs i.e for material etc or around specific campaigns. For instance, around March/ April, in line with new school sessions, they focus on raising school material for

underprivileged kids. Through awareness creation, they encourage people to be involved in the material collection to a financial contribution to volunteering etc.”

When it comes to content they have a good mix including text, pictures, gifs, and videos to break the monotony and to convey our works from different parts of the country.

The advocacy of the content is done mostly by their volunteers, supporters, and masses. As far as co-branded campaigns, the participating partner also promotes the content along with us so as to provide it more mileage by promoting it on their respective pages and audience.

The tracking of the social media initiatives Saola media analytics help us in tracking and measuring the result and also the feedback from the mass and the team too.

One thumb rule they use while using technology is to reach out to the needy and at the same time it should align with their values and social media is just a tool and not end itself. Also, it should help the communication between us and the mass, not hinder it.

‘Mata ki Chunni campaign’ is one of their successful campaigns After every Navratras (twice a year), they put an appeal to collect and drop the prayer chunnis used during the nine days of the festival. Thousands of chunnis are contributed each time which otherwise would have ended up in landfills. Goonj makes wedding lehengas from them to support families in villages.

The NGO believes in doing communication organically be it PR, Social media or advertising and till date, they have not used social media for fundraising.

The growing scale and spread of the work indicate that people have a good connection with Goonj and that they trust us. This is a success story where the social media has played a big role. Their ‘**Chuppi Todo Baithak**’ is another campaign by them through which they want to do away the myths related to women’s menstrual cycle. Their aim is to make masses aware of it as it’s about women’s dignity and establish it as normal. 100,000 menstrual ‘Dignity Packs’ will be made available to women and girls in far-flung areas.

Impulse

Impulse NGO Network (INGON) is a non-profit organization founded in 1993 by Hasina Kharbhih, to address the issue of unsafe migration, exploitation, and human trafficking. Hasina Kharbhih, the founder and current Chair Of Board of Impulse NGO Network started volunteering in the social development sector in 1987.

Today, Impulse NGO Network’s efforts against human trafficking expand across the eight states of North-East India, and to countries that India shares borders with, such as Nepal, Myanmar, and Bangladesh.

Unlike other NGOs and other social enterprises, Impulse maintains a very easy going strategy on their social media platforms. They do platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and the recent one is LinkedIn. Their Facebook and Instagram enjoy followers up to 3000. Their communication on these platforms is a mix of everything text, pictures, posters, videos developed in-house or curated by other media houses.

According to Hasina Kharbhih, Founder, Impulse NGO Network, “There has been a mushroom growth of NGOs and with the boom of social media each one of them is trying to make their presence in the most amplified way but many of them are missing the serious issues and concerns for which they have been set up.” There are activities less on the ground and in the field but publicity gimmick more on social media to draw attention.

Usage of social media for them is all about publishing insight reports, holding training programmes, disseminating information within the organization as they work and operate in multiple states via newsletters and regular updates on the website for donors. Impulse believes in using social media for purely information sharing rather than publicity gimmicks.

They still emphasize on their website which has made user-friendly and with shorter content. They follow a very clear communication pattern and use social media ethically and not something like Yellow Media platform something along the lines of Yellow Journalism.

In order to raise awareness, and better equip and skill our partners, Impulse NGO Network conducts issue-based research, With over 150 partners across the globe their content goes viral every day with multiple posts but in India, they go humbly with one post every day. They focus more media training and have media partners like Manipur Working Journalist Union (Manipur), Indigenous Herald, Zalen, Myanmar Journalist Association and Myanmar Press Council, Nagaland Post, Sikkim Express, Imphal Free Press, Vanglaini, Meghalaya Times.

They have also launched a project engaging the media to counter human trafficking in and between the borders of India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal. The project, evolved out of recognition of the media's important role in driving information on the complex issue, aims to bridge the gap between journalistic training and sensitization to human trafficking.

There are organizations, which massively use the new technology such as apps and social media held priority over the local regional media, even though India faces Digital Divide and their target audiences whom they are trying to reach remain inaccessible. It's a fact that we dream of digital India but one should also consider the cost of mobile data, the literacy rate, or if the locals would even use their devices the same way as in the West & Europe.

An awareness campaign on Human & Child Rights at CE UPS School held during 28th May 2018. Rosanna Lyngdoh Director Impulse NGO Network conducted a session on the rights of every child for their survival and protection and further explained that every child has the right to freedom, shelter, love, equality and keep motivating and encouraging for their career and to have hopes for their future as well.

In these 25 years, Impulse has assisted more than 72,442 human trafficking victims when in maximum years, wherein only traditional media was there.

Findings and Analysis:-

During this case study the researchers have observed the challenges, limitations and notion of NGOs when it comes to use social media as an integral element of today's technology. The NGOs are still focusing more on the use traditional media like newspapers, television and different ways of communication.

Paid posts are rampant on social media which sometimes leads as a setback for genuine information disseminated by other NGOs. These bodies are not profit making organization and many of them run on small budget and sponsored promotion of social media is a costly affair for them. They have to understand and give a thought on the cost involved in spreading their message and promoting their page.

Fundraising is still done through personal interactions and mailers and less through social networking. As it's a serious sector and an ample amount of time of conversation is needed when you think of potential donors. NGOs are also focusing on media training so that they indeed voice out the ground reporting and not sensationalize the issue.

They find interpersonal and group communication more reliable in comparison to virtual communication. This is because they understand it more effective and trust developing among the people who can get associated with them.

Most of the NGOs face Shortage of staff or rather skilled staff to execute things at a larger platform. Social media needs continuous engagement and updates for its followers.

Conclusion And Recommendations:-

There is no doubt that NGOs have made differences in the society. Even though when this concept was new in India, these bodies have worked on toes with minimum budget and resources to provide solution to issues faced in the society.

Different social sites offer consumers a wide range of options for sharing information. Twitter is a social site designed to let people share short messages or “updates” and Face book, in contrast allows for sharing updates, photos, joining events and a variety of other activities. There is an exchange of dialogue taking place

Active NGOs have lack of time to maintain their social media frequently. Promotion on digital platforms in the form of campaigns should accomplish quantifiable outcomes for NGOs. Some goals of NGOs include increasing donations, increasing members, member retention, creating and increasing awareness, increase volunteers, increase sponsors and corporate and individual partners through social media.

NGOs should think about the people behind the issue, no matter how impactful or good your cause is, all you need to know issues of access, connectivity and language of your audience. Who does and who does not have access to social media? Who can or cannot read or listen to the information shared using social media.

If an NGO fails to meet its task or is taking step down from a controversial issue it’s never a good idea to ignore comments or negative feedback on their social media platforms. Choosing content wisely if you are a small-size organization is a must, not every message can create an impact on all audience of different categories: young, mature, senior, low-income, highly paid professionals, business class, liberal, conservatives.

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